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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR A/S FRIED AND EUR/WE
NSC FOR NSA HADLEY
DOD FOR OSD/ISP

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN: AMBASSADOR AGUIRRE'S MEETING WITH FM
MORATINOS

Classified By: Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre; reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (C) Summary: One day after his June 27 arrival in Spain, US Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre met with Foreign Minister Moratinos to lay the groundwork for a new relationship after a year of difficult relations with the Socialist government, but also to make clear US concerns about Spanish policy toward Venezuela and Cuba and the lingering wounds in Washington over the Zapatero government's harsh rhetoric on Iraq and US electoral politics last year. Ambassador Aguirre urged Moratinos to undertake high level public statements to educate the Spanish public about the government's support for and active role in Iraq reconstruction and democratization, despite the withdrawal of Spanish troops. Moratinos took note of this suggestion, underscoring Spanish financial support for Iraq reconstruction, training of Iraqi security forces and assistance in judicial training. Moratinos told Aguirre he wants to work closely with him to avoid misperceptions and misunderstandings between the two countries. END SUMMARY

2. (C) Ambassador Aguirre thanked Moratinos for the warm welcome he had received already from the Spanish government, and for the speed in which the Spanish government has enabled him to get started. Copies of his letters of credence were accepted upon arrival, enabling his meeting with Moratinos to focus on substance rather than courtesies. The King had agreed to include him in a June 29 Ambassadorial credentials ceremony at the Royal Palace, which opens the door for an early meeting with President Zapatero. The Ambassador told Moratinos that this quick start fit with his personal style and his desire to be active as the face and the voice of US-Spain relations. Ambassador Aguirre underscored to Moratinos he plans to engage the Spanish public and press as well as the government to convey US views and explain US policies. He said President Bush, NSC Advisor Hadley and Secretary Rice want him to turn a new, fresh page in the

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relationship, with the Ambassador as the face and voice of the Administration. The Ambassador invited Moratinos to join him as a partner in this endeavor.

3. (C) Moratinos welcomed the Ambassador's active approach and said that the Spanish government had wanted to ensure a rapid start to his tenure in Madrid. King Juan Carlos personally decided to include the Ambassador in the already-scheduled June 29 credentials ceremony for several other Ambassadors, even though these ceremonies usually take place at least a month or more after an Ambassador's arrival in country.

4. (C) Ambassador Aguirre's arrival, Moratinos said, provides an opportunity to clear up misperceptions about the Zapatero government's policies and intentions, which had taken root after the Spanish troop withdrawal and during the US electoral campaign. Moratinos wants the US to understand that the Zapatero government seeks to create an atmosphere with the US of friendship and collegiality, and would like Washington to understand that his government is not anti-American nor ideological in its approach. While lines of communication were good, particularly after the series of high level meetings such as Moratinos with Secretary Rice and Defense Minister Bono with Secretary Rumsfeld, Moratinos hoped the arrival of a new US Ambassador offered the opportunity to develop a close dialogue and full cooperation with the Bush Administration. Moratinos said he had responded to a Spanish TV reporter's question June 27 about whether Presidents Bush and Zapatero would meet by saying that he had offered a broad time frame for a possible meeting within the tenure of the current Spanish legislature (which has at least 3 more years to go). Moratinos said he hoped that relations by then would have improved to such an extent that such a meeting could be possible.

5. (C) On Venezuela and Cuba, Moratinos worried that our policy differences had contributed to misperceptions between Washington and Madrid. He told the Ambassador that Spain shared U.S. objectives aimed its policies toward results and deeds. He urged cooperation between Spain and the US on these and other Latin America issues, which would have a

significant force-multiplying effect. On the positive side, Moratinos pointed to Spain's full support and leadership role in Afghanistan as a major positive element in our relationship. As an example, Moratinos noted Defense Minister Bono's appearance in the Spanish Parliament June 22 to announce additional troop deployments to support legislative elections there.

16. (C) Ambassador Aguirre said his focus would be on tangible results in the relationship and would not measure success by high-level visits (which he also stressed to the Spanish press after the meeting). The Ambassador urged Moratinos to work with him to turn our difficulties over Cuba and Venezuela into a net positive in our relationship, by remaining on the same page and avoiding steps that legitimize and encourage Chavez and Castro.

17. (C) On Iraq, the Ambassador told Moratinos that while the US had put the troop withdrawal issue behind us, there remained considerable lingering concern and irritation over the Zapatero government's rhetoric in the months following the withdrawal and during the US electoral campaign. This irritation will not easily dissipate but could be ameliorated, the Ambassador suggested, by new, positive public rhetoric by Zapatero and his team emphasizing that Spain recognizes progress made in Iraq. New Spanish rhetoric could note that Spain, along with the United States is now focused on the here and now and the future of Iraq, including reconstruction, democratization and capacity-building for Iraqi security forces. Such statements, aimed at educating the Spanish public about current goals and objectives in Iraq rather than dwelling on the past, would be noticed and welcomed in Washington. Moratinos said he would "take good note" of this advice, underscoring Spain's active role in providing financial support for reconstruction and development, training Iraqi security forces and judicial and related training.

18. (C) Ambassador Aguirre pointed to the Middle East and North Africa as areas in which the US and Spain shared common objectives and as ripe for opportunities to work together. Moratinos agreed, welcoming Secretary Rice's activism in the region. It would be very useful, Moratinos said, if all of the players in Washington, the EU and its members, the Quartet, could unify their messages both to Israel and the Palestinians. In North Africa, Moratinos said that competition among the players does not have to be the norm and that there is space for all, including in the area of commercial interests such as in oil and natural gas. He urged the development of a common strategic vision in this region.

19. (C) In a one-on-one session after the meeting, Moratinos again underscored to the Ambassador his government's desire to avoid misunderstandings with the United States and to open a new chapter in the relationship. The Ambassador said that he would work toward this end, but would also be frank but constructive about policy differences.

AGUIRRE